

THE MYSTERY
OF
JOHN JASPER

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The Editor
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Dear Sir,

I am sending you under
separate cover, a copy of my little
book which I trust you will
give such criticism as you
deem worthy.

Yours faithfully
H. R. Weaver

THE MYSTERY
OF
JOHN JASPER

:: BY ::

H. R. LEAVER, M.A.

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BY THE AUTHOR

To
Lloyd Hartnoll Bishop



FOREWORD



In offering this little book to the public, I feel that three brief explanations are necessary.

First, respecting the change of title from that originally adopted by Charles Dickens. By placing the confession of John Jasper at the beginning, the mystery of Edwin Drood is solved, but with its solution the greater mystery of John Jasper in particular, and crime in general, is thrust forward for the imagination to dwell upon. In the words of the two chroniclers in John Drinkwater's play, Abraham Lincoln, the wonder of life is in Man more than in the event.

"There is a wonder, always, everywhere—
Not that vast mutability which is event
The pits and pinnacles of change,
But man's desire and valiance—that range
All circumstance, and come to port unspent."

The second observation is that the book is offered not as a completion to the Dickens' story, but as a series of comments by the major characters.

My third remark is in anticipation of criticism respecting the medium of expression. No writer could copy Dickens' style. Any other prose style would lack the true attachment. Metrical form involves an elevation of the subject, and whether such elevation has been achieved is a matter for the reader to judge.

H.R.L.

Edmonton, Alta., August, 1925.

THE MYSTERY OF JOHN JASPER

INTRODUCTION



DETECTIVE STORY is the account of a puzzle in human affairs. It commences with threads of human intercourse which lead by intricate windings into a mesh of incident, finally emerging as a pattern not generally anticipated by the reader. Stop the process of the weaving midway, and you have an unsolved problem which challenges the curiosity of the reader, and stimulates in him a desire to come to a solution for himself. Such an unsolved problem is *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, Dickens' unfinished novel on which expert literary critics have been expending their energies for fifty years.

The efforts of these critics have been directed towards the solution of the mysteries which Dickens left when he died. There are several sources of information respecting minor points connected with the narrative. Mr. John Forster, a very close friend and also biographer of Dickens, was acquainted with the general intention of the story; Madame Perugini, the younger daughter, whose first husband, Mr. Collins, designed the original wrapper; Sir Luke Fildes, who was to illustrate the novel, and Charles Dickens the younger, who with Joseph Hatton

completed the plot in the form of a four act play. With such guides as these, together with half of the novel, to say nothing of the whole of Dickens' former work as a guide to method, scholars such as Mr. Cumming Walters, Mr. Procter, Mr. Andrew Lang, and Mr. William Archer, have not succeeded in unravelling the mystery to the satisfaction either of themselves or of the students of Dickens. Their work has tended to make the plot still more mysterious, thereby making it not unreasonable for a humbler student to attempt a solution. As an illustration of the many-sided opinion in the body of material written since the death of the author, we might cite the case of the original wrapper. No two critics agree as to the interpretation of the figures in the design. The deeper mysteries of the story, however, have as many solutions as there are critics.

Mr. Robertson Nicol has gathered together the most relative of the material dealing with the subject in a very readable and entertaining book. His work shows how very far afield the quest has taken men in their endeavors to discover any side-light on the question, and in addition to a summary of the various solutions he presents his own version of the matter.

The story is about Edwin Drood, a young architect, who visits his uncle John Jasper, choirmaster in Cloisterham Cathedral. Drood is engaged to Rosa Bud, a young girl at the local seminary, but the engagement was arranged by their parents and neither of the parties is enthusiastic about it. The uncle is in love with Rosa, and when Neville Landless, a dark-featured youth from Ceylon, arrives as pupil to the Reverend Septimus Crisparkle, he also becomes enamoured of the young lady. Landless and Drood are natural enemies, and when the suspicion of
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murder falls upon the former, after the disappearance of Drood, the first mystery of the book is thrown out for solution.

There are authorities who say that Drood was murdered; there are critics who say that he was not; there are students who say that murder was attempted, but that it was not successful. In the case of the possible murder, there are many opinions concerning the manner of the crime. In the case of mere disappearance, the theories as to what happened are legion. This leads to the second mystery.

After Drood's disappearance, an old gentleman, called Dick Datchery, appears in Cloisterham. He has come, presumably, to spy on Jasper. No one admits the possibility that he is an entirely new character, and so the hunt concerns that character already on the stage which Datchery impersonates. The following are not only mere suggestions, but are supported by authorities with logical evidence for their advocacy: Drood himself; Helena Landless, the sister of the suspected murderer; Bazzard, the lawyer's clerk; Grewgious, the lawyer; Tartar, a retired seafaring man. Andrew Lang has a theory that Landless disguised himself as Datchery, and the sister, Helena, disguised herself as her brother.

The third mystery has respect to the opium woman, to whom Jasper goes on occasion for relief from his nervous strain. That she is some blood relation to the central characters of the story is the belief of Mr. Robertson Nicol.

In the following attempted solution of these three mysteries, the view is taken that Drood was murdered, that the character Datchery is Bazzard in disguise, and that the opium woman is related to Edwin Drood.

With respect to the actual murder, Mr. Andrew Lang has said: "If Edwin Drood is dead, there is not much mystery about him." Those who read detective stories, are not concerned so much with the actual incident, as with the concealment of method attending the incident. If the mystery lasts from cover to cover, that is all the reader expects, and he is the happier the more he is invited to investigate the procedure himself. Was Drood murdered, or was he not, is not so deep a question as the means employed. As attendant circumstances, adding to the mystery of the disappearance of Drood, Dickens has introduced the questions of opium, the cathedral tower, the quicklime, Sapsea's monument, the keys of the crypt and of the monument, and Jasper's long scarf. These in themselves provide mystery enough for the reader to conjure with.

In the case of Datchery, there is a greater problem to solve. Mr. Robertson Nicol takes the view that Helena Landless has adopted that disguise for the purpose of protecting her brother. To give some ground for this belief, he illustrates from Dr. Eick's article on "The Psychology of Dissimulation," showing that the manifestations of positive life cannot be imitated by those who have no positive characteristics. A brave man can pretend to be a coward, but no coward can put on courage. By this process of argument, together with other peculiarities of identification, Mr. Robertson Nicol arrives at his conclusion. Under the circumstances, any view taken is nothing more than a hypothesis. Supposing Bazzard to be Datchery, the following facts may be found to support the supposition. Bazzard disappears when Datchery appears. In chapter twenty, the lawyer Grewgious, speaking to Rosa Bud, says: "He is off duty here, altogether, just at present."

Dickens wrote originally: "He is off duty at present."

This conversation occurs immediately after Datchery's appearance in Cloisterham, and Bazzard does not appear again in the story. We know moreover that Bazzard is a misfit. He has no interest in a law office. His interest lies in theatricals, especially in tragedy. He has a peculiar influence over his employer. Grewgious has a suspicion that Jasper is the real criminal very early after the crime. Would it not be reasonable that these two, Grewgious and Bazzard, the lawyer from the criminal point of view, and his clerk from the standpoint of tragedy, would come to some arrangement, whereby both would work in conjunction for the discovery of the criminal?

There is one other mystery which challenges the reader's penetration and that is the connection between the opium woman—Princess Puffer, as Deputy calls her—and the other characters of the story. The view taken in this present interpretation is that she is the mother of Edwin Drood. There is nothing in the narrative that would indicate any special relationship, but some motive must be supplied for her evident dislike of Jasper, and her still more evident interest in his drunken mutterings. One relationship is as good as another to supply this motive.

Every reader of this puzzling mystery will find his thoughts dwelling on the possible early life of John Jasper. Such a terrible malice, and such a practised calm as he possesses are not the product of anything short of a life experience. He must have had a very bitter childhood, one in which the soothing sympathy of a mother, and the guiding companionship of a father were absent.

JASPER



AND HERE I write it down, a life's affair,
Deep red before the ever ripening years
Have added color to my other work;
Scarce thirty and the scroll is finished.
'Twere better so, for nightly in my
dreams

Ned walks before me with my double scarf
Entwined about his throat, and by his side,
As in the Close scarcely three years ago,
Walks Rosa, child-like in her innocence;
And as I view them, former thoughts crowd out
My later knowledge, and my blood runs thick;
My throbbing veins fill with the rage of years,
That when I wake, the beads of bloody sweat
Stand thick upon my brow as on that eve
I stood rain-soaked above the corpse of Ned.

But to my story ere the hangman comes.
Within this cell I write it for the priest
The Minor Canon, who devoted, calls
To fan the ashes of my sullen soul
With mention of the better world to come;
But this I tell him having learned it here
That there can be no better world for me
If Rosa be not mine both here and there.

This script I give him for his zeal's reward
When he the final function ministers.
He used to say my voice like frankincense
Arose aloft and heralded the choir
Within the blessed mansions of the just.

Poor simple man—

He little knew my ways
Nor saw the venom that was overlaid
By seeming courtesy; yet he will know
That I was conscious of a sunken worth,
And surely will with Christian principle
Forgive my lack when I have paid the price.

The first deed of my tragedy, of which
This Christmas Eve enactment is the last,
Began long since, when Ned and I were boys,
And he the younger, fashioned all his pranks
With simple artifice, and so appeared
Repentant always after his misdeeds,
While I was left to take the bitter brunt
Because my pride would not allow the act
Of fawning, nor the servile cloak, that hides
The contour of the soul.

Alone I stood,
As one condemned, sunk in depravity,
While he was cherished with a fond regard,
And shown to me as pattern in all ways
Of conduct such as I should imitate.

Thus by smooth paths he gained a good report
And taught me smoothness as a good veneer
To cover what was not acceptable.
E'en in those days a desperate hate, conceived
By torture of my maddened soul, claimed room
Within my being, and the foul intent
To work him harm grew daily in its strength.

But this was nothing to my later thought,
When that fair vision of all loveliness
Before whose beauty, radiant in its spring,
My fortunes brought me in an evil day.

Fair Rosa with her father, often came
To visit Drood the elder, and there grew
An understanding that young Edwin Drood
Should marry Rosa Bud in later years.
Such visits were a comfort to my soul,
For when engaged in singing, in which art
I had some gift, and lessons were allowed
To give it culture, she would stand alone
And watch me, listening with parted lips,
While I as serpent in her paradise,
Employed my only talent to secure
Her early favor and her first goodwill.

Then when I found her left as legacy,
Left to my nephew, and he indiff'rent
Of the gift, my glowing hate leaped white-flamed
To its purpose, till my trembling fingers
Played at strangling, and the common practice
Of the bloody act gave such a quiet calm,
A soothing influence o'er my distress,
That hope of winning Rosa Bud for wife
Was always linked with death of Edwin Drood.

Yet there were other intervals of calm,
When all intent of crime was lulled into
A stern forbearance, in the earnest hope
That Ned and Rosa would not carry out
The wishes of their parents, since respect
For their desire seemed all the bond they had.

Such intervals were to my ice-bound soul
As budding Spring upon the Kentish hills,
Fresh with the scent of purple violets;
Or as the music of the Summer breeze
When apple blossoms lightly fall to earth.

There are in the sonata, episodes,
Connecting themes with their development,
Short intervals of melody, sweet airs
That meet the ear in even flowing tone.
My life like the sonata had its theme,
The taking of the life of Edwin Drood;
But in the intervals, these passing gleams
Of sunshine joined my subject crime with this
Conclusion;

Vainly would I cherish hope
That Rosa would forsake her childhood's trust
And grow to love me in her growing years.
And vainly when she came to Cloisterham
Would I in chant and song lay bare my soul.
For oftentimes, when teaching her some air,
A song, love-laden, from the opera,
She'd gaze with eyes so deeply innocent,
Not knowing why I chose such theme for her,
Or why I looked so steadfastly upon
Her countenance, that then my only hope
Died with the song; then would she break away,
And leave me heart-sick by the instrument.

But when I saw her afterwards with Ned,
When in the ecstasy of future hope
They sipped the present sweets of their content
In grove, or woodland, or the shady walks
Around the cloister, such an agony
Of passion seized me that I feared my mood
For murder would not wait a fitting time.

Then for relief I'd seek the opium den,
A vile resort kept by a withered hag,
Diminutive in stature, brainless too,
Whose palsied hand prepared the happy drug
That gave my sullen senses sweet repose,

Dreams of the fairest fancies, images
Of Rosa, and delicious harmonies
Whose cadences upon the velvet air
Were hushed to silence in the drowsy breeze.
There would I meet my fellow traveller
Whose journey o'er the great abyss gave me
No pallid fear of any deep remorse.

From such a sleep I would awake refreshed,
The storm of passion giving place to calm
And quiet purpose, fitting me to face
The solemn service in cathedral choir.

Then Landless came, my foil for letting blood;
Of tropic temper from the Ceylon clime;
So fitted to my scheme that I had need
No more to fashion bloody ways and means
With constant peril of their ill success.
My purposes took shape, and in their mould
This Indian lay all ignorant of the crime
The blame for which would rest upon his name.

Poor Ned and he were enemies at sight;
The one too forward in his love's attack,
The other careless and indifferent.
But what cared I for all their love affairs,
Their hate I turned into my timely gain.
A quarrel in my rooms, a winecup storm,
Made more tempestuous by a vicious drug,
Found ready tongues to gossip it around,
A wordy conflict, rousing enmity,
Which in the rumor, speedy as the wind,
Grew till the telling gave a flavoring
Of murder with the dark-skinned Landless named
As culprit in a base and foul attack.

So flourished all my hopes, and Christmas Eve
Found me prepared to play the final act.
The drunken Durdles had supplied my wants,
The crypt key, and the key to Sapsea's tomb.
All other plans were by the Canon made;
Landless and Ned must needs be reconciled
And for that satisfaction they must meet
Within my rooms; thus said the simple priest,
So innocently did he work for me.
By this would Landless be the murderer
And Justice, moving with the evidence
I would proclaim, would count him criminal,
And he could at the gallows pay the price
So my one act would serve a double death.

Within my rooms they buried all their wrongs
As much of reconciliation as they wished
They proffered forth, and drank their friendship's bond
By way of toast in my polluted wine,
Which, having done, they went into the night.
A stormy night, howling with wind and rain,
Raging with fury greater than my own;
For though I had a seeming calm, my soul
Was in a storm of passion, rage, and pain.

Ned's purpose was to see the storm's effect
Upon the river, where the rushing weir
Makes thunder all its own, and storms its way
To lower levels;

As I now look back

My strange behavior in the light of crime
Seems more uncanny than the crime itself,
So faithfully had I the lesson learned
From Ned, to cover up the current thought
With seeming pleasance and a genial brow.
I sang short melodies from old-time songs,

Brief airs from oratorios, hymn tunes
Possessing themes that spoke of love and peace.
Such was the upper current of my mind
While turbulence raged in the depths below.

I left the Gatehouse by the gravel path
Across the Close where I could hear Ned's steps
Returning o'er the hard Cathedral walk.

The rain still fell in torrents and the wind
Had strewn the sodden ground with many boughs
From massive trees; a fallen sheet of lead
Lay on the walk, and fragments of the stone
Torn by the wind from off the darkened tower
Fell clatt'ring on old Sapsea's monument.

Within the shelter of the door I stood
And waited; would he come this way or take
Some other course?

Just then I heard a step,
And as I peered forth from the sheltering door
Saw Ned alone bent forward 'gainst the driving wind.
He staggered once or twice so that I knew
My drug had worked, and that a little more
Of application would complete the work.

I walked to meet him, and he mumbled out
Some incoherent words about the storm
And Landless, river, floods, and endless walks.
I humored him and led him to the crypt
Before whose entrance I detained his steps,
Beguiling all the time with common talk
Till I had wound my scarf into a rope
So as to be more sudden in its work.
He cowered near to me as though in fear
Of sudden peril of the raging wind
And then I strangled him;



He fell like lead
Into my arms; I laid him on the ground
And took his watch and pin, the evidence
That would establish his identity.

Just then a something with a clatt'ring sound
Fell on the stones between me and the corpse;
I staggered back and thought of Deputy
And waited by the door for his approach.
But no one came, only the driving blast
Beat through the topmost elms and made them creak,
As though the Spirit of the Storm had come
As overseer to point Destruction out
And give direction to the Elements.
So reassured, I crept along the ground
And found the large hand from the Tower clock
Upon the flag-stones near the silent corpse.
It seemed a fitting thing that Time should cease,
That all should pause upon the midnight sky
And witness riot in the realm of Man.

Yet I had not completed all my task,
There still remained to hide from human sight
The witness of my horrid bloody deed.
Old Sapsea's monument was all prepared
With quicklime, and in this I laid poor Ned,
Till, fearing Durdles and his watchful ear,
I could remove the corpse of Sapsea's wife
And bury it in quicklime by the road,
While Ned would take her place inside the vault.

What followed is the world's affair, and needs
No further comment of my own; now come
The Minor Canon with his Better Land,
My tale for his, I wish him joy of it.

THE MINOR CANON.



SENIOR CANON here in Cloisterham,
And humble priest of God in Holy
Church,
For six years have I passed a peaceful
life,
In celebrating services each day,

In daily visits to the sick, thereby
Preparing such to enter Heaven's Gate.
And then the Sabbath services; so week
By week, Christmas to Easter, Easter on
To Advent, thus the Church's seasons pass,
Continual Fast and Prayer, on which the world
So little doth impinge, that "all the world,"
For so Our Lord did bid us go and preach,
For me is from the Corner to the Close
Cathedral-wards.

Yet by this sad event,
In which our celebrated chorister
Has foully stained the rites of Holy Church,
The world with all its baser practices,
Has come within the sacred edifice,
And rudely broken in upon our peace.
As Rabshakeh, upon the city wall,
Within the precincts of Jerusalem,
And in the shadow of the Temple's gates,
Spoke scornfully about the Jewish God,
So he has sung the Psalms in our own tongue,
Deceiving all by his hypocrisy.

When Uzzah, in King David's time, put forth
His hand, and touched the Ark of God, what time

It came to Nachon's threshing floor, the Lord
In anger slew him, for it was the Ark,
And therefore holy in the sight of God.
Too sad, e'en to relate the wrong he's wrought,
This murder, done within the Church's shade,
By one, who held such sacred offices,
Choirmaster, teacher, leader of the song
That echoed oftentimes from the chancel roof.

And yet we thought, in our blind ignorance,
That he, who took the Holy Eucharist,
Where none presume thus to present themselves,
Without due preparation for the Feast,
Was filled with holy fervor for the Church.

"The blood of bulls and goats," so says the Psalm,
Is not acceptable for sacrifice,
So dearly as a sad and contrite heart.
We did the wrong, to look with mortal sight,
And judge the service pleasing was to Him,
Who sees all things, and knows the inmost heart.

This Achan has deceived the hearts of men;
For weekly as we knelt down side by side,
He at my left, and took the blessed Feast,
There seemed so strong a sense of holy worth,
So deep devotion in his placid mien,
That in my sinful heart I felt accused;
And when the anthem, "Teach me now O Lord,"
Rang through the lofty arches, led by him,
In his melodious voice, so full and pure,
So excellent in tone, in fervor deep,
Religious feeling in the very throb
And accent of the sacred word and phrase,
I only felt how deeply fortunate
We humble folk of Cloisterham were, to have

So great a singer to interpret psalm,
Or sacred song, so good a man to lead
The Church's praise.

And now he's in the cell,
Awaiting death, the common felon's death.
What thoughts are his as matin bell
Peals out the invitation to the church?
What solace has he in the random thought
That brings the past back in a double flood
Of pitiless regrets, remorse unquenched,
Deplorable condition for a man.

But why am I so confident of this
His penitence? Have I not made mistakes
In summing up the virtues of this man?
And possibly I err in giving him
Repentance such as one should rightly feel.
I cannot yet accommodate myself
To Jasper—murderer; the thought appals;
The singer yet has charm upon my soul.
Could I dismiss the one from my long years
Of ministry, I might then find a place
Within my catalogue of sinful men
Where I could put this sinner and his crime.
Between the recent exit of this man,
The surpliced singer of the church's choir,
And entrance of this bloody murderer,
I stand confused, no power to make a choice.

Yet was not David guilty of the crime
Of murder, taking first the wife in lust
And vile concupiscence, and setting then
Uriah in the foremost battle line?
And must we not in David's case, also
Combine the psalmist with the murderer
To make the man? May Heaven grant me time

To justify this new conceit, and give
The true consideration for all forms
Of human action, whether culpable
Or else praiseworthy, as we judge them so.

That other too, who was my pupil once,
Poor Neville Landless, Honeythunder's ward,
Himself his worst and direst enemy.
He likewise cannot linger very long,
Though under other circumstance awaits
The call to cross into that other world;
So open in his conduct, frank and true,
And as Nathaniel, from deceitful guile,
Free as the winds that kiss the water's cheek
In summer; yet disposed to storms of rage,
When honor is abused, and he is crossed
By fitful circumstance;

I love him much,
As worthy of sincere and high regard;
But more so do I now esteem his worth
As brother to dear Helena, whose name
Alone, now conjures up in me the sense
Of what true worth should be, and how I lack
The qualities that she deserves to win
When love dictates a choice; how like she is
To Esther Queen of Persia, who, to save
Her people from extermination, risked
Her own life, in petitioning the King.
So fearless, undisturbed by happenings
That would perturb the boldest, bravest heart.
For see how sure she was of innocence
In Neville, when he stood accused by all
The folk who dwelt in Cloisterham, and the Dean
Insisted that he must surely leave the town.

She loves me, and I'm happiest of men
In cherishing so deep a love as hers,

Returning what is best in me, perchance
Far short of what her worth should really claim.

Unhappy have we been these many months
Since Edwin Drood departed from us all.
So many wrongs spring from one hateful crime;
One woe doth bring so many in its wake,
That nought of calm or peace have we enjoyed,
Since Christmas Eve, when Jasper slew his ward.

When at the first that Landless came to us,
With Honeythunder sponsor for the lad,
I had misgivings of the task I took,
And feared the outcome of his hasty mood.
Some weeks there passed before I was assured
That Landless really tried to curb his rage
On provocation; but when once I'd seen
His spirit struggling with the tiresome fault,
I knew the victory was one of time.

Poor Drood and he were opposites in blood;
The one as flint upon the other's steel,
And Rosa Bud was cause of their dispute.
Drood was too laggard, and the other swift
To demonstrate emotion of the soul.
And since dear Edwin was the chosen mate
For Rosa, by their parents' dying wish,
As also by a compact of their own,
I reasoned with him o'er such foolishness
As finding quarrel with the summer breeze
Because it moved too gently through the pines;
Or cloud that hung suspended o'er the lake,
Too slow in motion to awake desire.

So would I warn my pupil he was but
A watcher, and no critic of these two
Who had been lovers from their childhood's days.

He took my simple figures as a jest,
But saw my point, and for example gave
The case of Abigail, King David's wife,
Who left the arms of Nabal for the King,
For Nabal was a fool.

So reasoned he;

But my instruction soon bore timely fruit.
To reconcile them both I formed a plan
Of meeting at the Gate House, Jasper's home,
Where they on Christmas Eve could shake the hand,
And banish quarrel in a glass of wine.
They both agreed, and so I thought them friends.
Alas! so strangely woven are affairs
Of men; so intricate the human web,
That any effort to unravel this,
The tangle of a week, discloses that,
The complication of so many years.

That Christmas Eve, I felt a gentle peace
Steal o'er my soul, for knowing Landless' mind
Was subject to impressions of my own,
I had concluded all was going well;
And so I rose that Christmas morn to greet
New birth of goodwill 'mong my fellow men,
Especially my pupil and young Drood.

All right the howling wind raged with a force
That wrought destruction in the little town.
The chimneys crashed upon the tiled roofs,
And people held to corners of the street,
To keep themselves from being blown about.
As sailors, on some ship in eastern seas,
Where typhoons tear the ocean into foam,
Seek fitting vantage points, which are secure
From buffets of the flying tackle, so

Wayfarers walked that night in fearful dread
Of violence from tempest-driven shreds
Of shutters, tiles, and loosened stones, which fell
As from the hand of some enraged God.

By daylight, all is still, and anxious men
Come early forth to view the tempest's work.

I see them from my lattice, as I take

My morning pugilistic exercise.

There stood an idle group of four or five

Beside my gate, who looked into the sky

With hands raised to their eager eyes to shade

The sunlight; they were looking up aloft

Upon the old cathedral tower, where stood

The mason Durdles; he has seen the harm,

The storm's work of the gusty night before,

And for immediate repair, had climbed

The tower;

Just as I glanced upon the group

Appeared the face of Jasper, worn, and strained,

Appealing to my window where I stood.

Half dressed he was, pale, haggard as with fright.

He clutched the garden fence, and wildly asked,

Where was his nephew; "Is he not with you?"

I asked, and straight he told the tale, how they,

His nephew and my pupil, homeward bound,

Had left the Gate House at the midnight chime,

To view the storm's appearance on the weir,

And had not yet returned; he then enquired

For Landless, who, I said, had early left

Upon a walking tour for holiday.

At this he charged my pupil openly

With murder, sought immediate force of law

To capture him, and went to see the mayor.

The warrant Sapsea granted, and we found

Dear Neville walking leisurely, some few

Miles distant out of Cloisterham; he stopped
To let us pass, but we surrounded him,
And after slight resistance, brought him back.

His manner towards me showed his innocence.
Accordingly I formed a strong resolve
To hold fast by his guiltlessness, and prove
If possible, that his was not the crime.
The process of the trial revealed to me
The strange emotions of the busy world,
The yearning for life's shadows, not the true
And tangible, with values that are real.

Old Sapsea doubted Neville's innocence
All through the trial, and even now believes
He was the culprit of the crime, in spite
Of proofs brought forth by Grewgious and his clerk.
This latter posed as Datchery among
The folk of Cloisterham, and I have heard
That he was subtle in the search for proof;
Gained much from Deputy, old Durdles' boy,
And even visited the opium den,
Which Jasper frequented, to hear his wild
And incoherent ravings, when subdued
By that vile drug.

These things are past my thought;
My ways of life have put me out of touch
With that vast field, in which the worldly man
Gains his experience; therein I've lost
The wisdom of the serpent in the close
Confinement of the church's ministry;
That harmlessness, the dove's own quality,
Is not fit attribute in world affairs
Without the knowledge of the serpent's guile.
I would not know the more for knowledge sake,

But merely to accommodate myself
To laymen in the busy marts of life.
And more, I could assist the younger folk,
Preparing them for that which comes in life;
Poor Neville, for example, who has need
To know the movements of the outside world.

I am much afraid for Landless; he has
Suffered much these many months, since Edwin
Left us; first the charge, then Rumor's scandal;
And this upon a constitution weak
By reason of long sojourn in a clime
Of tropic temper; all ambition lost
Since Rosa married Tartar; Helena
Agrees with me that Neville has no heart
To live, and were his sister not employed
In cheering his sad moments, there would be
More sudden a decline than is today
Apparent: still I do not like his look,
And cannot alter it by any hope
That Christian teaching would suggest to me.

He sent me word to come and see him soon,
And Jasper likewise has expressed a wish
That I would come again before he dies.
I trust that I may work some service there.
These two, both young, as years are given to men;
Both with ability to work a good;
And yet the same event has laid them low,
The one by law's decree, the other worn.
By strain of circumstance; both at death's door,
And I am acting usher for them both
Across the shadows to their next abode

Our Saviour, to the thief upon the cross,
A Criminal, spoke with a certainty,
That he should be that day in Paradise.

My task to change John Jasper's soul, when he,
For twenty years has cherished such a hate,
That in its blooming took another's life.

The warder tells me he is resolute
About his fate, not reconciled, but given
To moody mutterings, as if he thought
The world had made the void he now endures.
So I have doubts about my services
To one so hardened in his attitude
Towards the fancied wrongs he has received,
And not a moiety of tender thought
Towards the ravage he has done to men.

How in a week, change man's immortal soul
From that it has been to what it should be,
How change the current of the mountain stream,
When once its course is hollowed from the heights?
But why do I thus reason? 'Tis my task
To work God's will upon this human soul.
Did not the prophet Jonah preach to men
Of Nineveh, who, dyed in vicious sin,
Repented at the word? so will I do,
And leave the saving of John Jasper's soul
To such life-giving essence as may work
Through my poor counsel, and the Living Word.

GREWGIOUS



HERE have been times in my long lonely
life

When I have had ambition, and my
friends—

Those college friends, who knew me
best of all,

My schoolmates of the bygone misty years—

Would say in comment of my chosen path,

"Grewgious," they'd say, "you're out of place in law,

Ambition in a lawyer runs to seed,

When bound up with a strict integrity;

You have the shadow of the law's account

Without the substance that pertains to it."

Thereat I'd laugh their reasoning to scorn,

Knowing full well how critical they were.

For in my early years I thought the law

Existed so that justice might be done

In all departments of our social life,

And this ideal has governed all my course.

E'en though I've had no practice at the Bar

Nor scarcely know how to prepare a brief,

My work throughout has been with men's estates;

Freehold and copyhold in English law

Have been my course of study, which domain

Has brought sufficient for my daily wants.

Till this affair of Jasper roused my mind

To criminal procedure, I was known

In business as "Receiver of the Rents".

My parents were beyond the usual time
Of life when children come, and I was born
A chip, sun-dried, cross-grained, and difficult
To mould, no form of tender bud in me;
And so I'm angular, with no smooth parts
To recommend me in society.

My later years have had their recompense
Beyond the steady toil of office work,
Beyond that close contact with business,
Which in itself brings joy and hope enough
Though dark sometimes with clouds of blackest hue.

My lonely life is brightened by one ray
Of purest white among the darker shades
That color all the border of my thought.
Fair Rosa is a flower just in bloom,
And all the freshness of her happy life
Is mine, and all her thought, her opening soul,
Her heart, so like her mother's in the days
That were, are cherished as my very own;
And all the paths which she has daily trod
Have been to me as avenues of light
Directing all my lonely thought anew
To those past joys, those days of love and youth,
When Rosa's mother read my secret soul,
And sorrowed for the secret which she read.

Yet Rosa knows me as her guardian
And with a daughter's love does render me
The fond regard she would have given her sire.
Now she is wife to Tartar, and my thought,
Observing all their peaceful happiness,
Still lingers with poor Drood and his decease.

'Tis true I could not write a tragedy
With half the skill that Bazzard has employed
In weaving all the threads of Jasper's plot,
E'en though my life depended on the work,
Yet mine has been the thought behind the task,
My knowledge of employment of the law
Which brought the murder of young Drood to light.

John Jasper hangs tomorrow, and the scene
Which Bazzard wanted for his tragedy
Runs to the end within the hangman's noose,
He's had great scope in this for tragic theme
Whose action opened when that Jasper first
Assumed the wardenship of Edwin Drood.

There was a jealousy and keen dislike,
Which I as guardian of Rosa Bud—
The bride-to-be of Edwin—could not help
But notice, though in later years the knave
Professed a loving friendship for his ward.
They were both reared beneath the self-same roof,
And took their boyish sports on field and down.
'Twas then that Jasper served to keep young Ned
From mischief, when that John the elder Drood,
On pressing business made his stay in town.

Poor Edwin's mother loved the city life,
And left her husband when their child was weaned.
'Tis said that John searched London for his wife,
And by misfortune overcome, took sick
And left his boy to Jasper when he died.
The compact made with Bud was ratified
When Drood the elder journeyed home to die.

No trace of Edwin's mother was there found,
Nor through the years has knowledge come of her,

Till Bazzard, in his search for tragic threads,
To weave into the tissue of this crime
Found her in town, purveying opium
Within the sullen shadows of a room,
A garret, dingy, foul, the vile resort
Of Lascars from the docks, whose only vent
For pleasure was the vicious drunken sleep.
The riot of a brain decayed, the storm
Of passions lulled to sensuous pleasantry.

To such resort came Jasper oftentimes,
Not knowing whose the hand that mixed the drug,
Now whose the brain that heard his wanderings,
When he detailed the journey Ned would take,
The long, lone journey to the void abyss.

She, with the glimmer of a love that was,
The faintest flicker of a love for Ned,
Her babe long since, took note of Jasper's words,
Rememb'ring that her child was likewise Ned,
And that the child now grown to manly form
Might be the victim of some vicious crime,
Went down to dreamy Cloisterham once or twice
To keep a watch on Jasper, and to warn
The unsuspecting Ned if he were there,
Of the intent and purpose of the knave.

On Christmas Eve she visited the town
And though she met young Drood, her long-lost son,
She knew him not, nor did she meet the man
For whom she sought; but on her second trial,
My maker-of-the-tragedy, as hound
Upon the scent, discovered she had cause
To wish for his detection, and detailed
Locations, habits, such as he had found,
In fine, he sorted all this singer's acts
And gave them her as mental provender,

thirty-four

As food for her to chew upon, in fact
The very life of Jasper, so that she
Might add her quota to the total sum
Of knowledge he possessed;

So Bazzard noted—
(The Cloisterham people called him Datchery,
For so he wished concealment from the mob,
And since I'm angular and wish no change
From Bazzard as a name, I call him such).
Well, Bazzard peered through all the dusky chinks
And crannies of the life within the Close,
And as the robin knows where underground
The worm hides in the darkness of his haunt,
And brings it for inspection to the light,
So Bazzard at one peck found Deputy,
Devoured the information he concealed,
And hungry with increase of appetite,
Gave liberal payment in advance for clues.

From Deputy he learnt of wanderings
With Durdles up the old cathedral tower,
Of Jasper trudging with a load of lime
One later night to Sapsea's monument,
And further midnight journeys when that he—
The Deputy—had fancied Durdles out
Beyond the accustomed hour, that Christmas Eve,
The night of storm and tempest, rain and wind;
He thought he followed Durdles through the Close,
But blinding rain obscured his vision,
And when the lightning flashed he recognized
The singer Jasper; Deputy had left
Without the warning 'widdy,' which he used
To let the mason know of his approach.

Thus clue to clue was added, till the threads
Made web enough to catch the cunning fly.

When Bazzard told me his discoveries,
The framework of the tragedy in life,
He but confirmed suspicion I had felt
For many months; I told my tale to him,
How in that Christmas week I visited
The guardian of Edwin to transfer
The knowledge Rosa had delivered me—
Their compact broken, and each free from each—
How he had changed in color, deeply moved,
Chalk-white, with ghastly, hollow, staring eyes,
How he had clutched the chair frantically,
And how he rose, remorse within his eye,
Then sank to earth, a heap of mud-stained clothes,
A veritable chaos of a man,
All this I told to Bazzard for his play,
And he for acting, I for testimony,
Together planned the course we should adopt
To bring conviction in the courts of law.

All facts conjoined, established in my heart
The guilt of Jasper getting rid of Ned,
And gave me evidence to free from blame
The dark-skinned Landless, and from cruel suspense
The sister Helena, for which the priest,
Crisparkle, Minor Canon in the Church
Has never ceased to show his gratitude.

'Tis true that Landless was of Indian birth,
Was fiery, with a temper uncontrolled;
That he and Edwin had antipathy
Was strongly urged by all the Sapsea throng
Who took my beauteous Rosa as the cause
Of their dispute, and made it so appear
That 'twas a rival's quarrel; that may be,
But their last parting by the river's bank
Was in all friendship, witness Landless' words



When he was taken into custody:—

"We parted at your door;" no guilty crime
In one as young as Landless could remain
Concealed beneath the surface of the soul.

The meditated crime, for such I think
This was, has features reaching to the past,
Deep buried in the strata of the years.
Yet Landless was unknown to Drood till late,
A few weeks at the most of intercourse.
Besides, the hasty temper brings its act
Immediate, the criminal upon
The impulse strikes his victim, and the search
Is short, since murder so committed, has
The choice of neither time nor season, but
Depends upon the momentary mood.

But this was not the case in Jasper's crime;
His villainy began in boyhood, sprang
From jealousy developed in the youth,
A blight within the growing radicle,
Which warped integrity, and gave the slant
That bent the man to crown his jealousy
With this last final act of villainy.

But Sapsea, reasoning o'er these many points,
Though unacquainted with the precedent
And present practice of our English law,
Together with an ignorance of men
Except as buyers in his auction sales,
Took circumstantial evidence for fact,
Not as a potent possibility.
He has condemned this Landless on the ground
That he was last with Ned that Christmas Eve,
And should explain his disappearance
Or else bring forth the living Drood to light.

He ordered search be made for Jasper's ward:
With pole and net they dragged the river bed
To bring the victim's body from the ooze.
So working on that same hypothesis,
And strengthened by the timely evidence
Of Edwin's watch and chain upon the weir,
This Sapsea thought to see a mangled corpse
Rise from the tangled weeks for evidence
And proof of guilt against the one accused.

But to the evidence of Jasper's crime,
Which Bazzard in his search for tragedy
Unearthed and brought into the light of day,
Convincing all who worked upon the crime
The justice of conviction 'gainst this man.

There was no point of contact small or great,
Which Jasper had in Cloisterham, but he
Examined it as with a microscope.
He watched his quarry morn and noon and night,
Took cognisance of times when he arose,
Retired, and all the wherefore of his moves,
He learned of Sapsea and his monument:
Of Sapsea's wife, who lay within the vault,
And of the room reserved for one more corpse,
When time should bring old Sapsea to his grave.

Likewise he questioned Durdles, and arranged
For midnight strolls among the mossy tombs,
And through the old cathedral, to the crypt,
And up the tower, the mason loosening
His tongue as Bazzard lent the spirit flask.

Thus Durdles lectured on the ancient ones
Who dwelt within the church's masonry;
Of bishops with their robes episcopal;

Of disobedient nuns, who for their sins
Against the canons of the ancient house
Were built into the structure of the wall,
And died examples of the abbey's rule,
A warning to the others' tendencies.

With hammer in his hand and dinner bag,
The mason showed his talent in the search
For cases of immurement in the church;
And for a better demonstration tapped
The vault of Sapsea; "Hollow and solid;
Here's solid in the hollow monument;
That's Mrs. Sapsea, not yet gone to dust."
He tapped again and here his lesson stopped.
His ear, through practice, had obtained the pitch
And resonance of solid wood and stone;
Reverberations from the hollow vault
And echoes from decaying masonry,
Had tuned his ear to recognise by sound
Conditions not apparent to the eye.
He tapped once more with more determined stroke;
"Here's Mrs. Sapsea, six feet from the wall,
But here there's changes; someone's restless corpse
Avoiding earth's corruption has e'en moved
From out his earthy underground abode
And taken up this vault for tenement."

At this the mason muttered to himself,
Took up his dinner bundle and went home.
And Bazzard, with a ling'ring parting look,
Which asked: "What secrets lie within that tomb?"
Went to the corner cupboard of his room,
And drew a longer chalk mark than before;
Then after contemplation, changed the score
By placing there another mark and drew
A circle round the two, by which account

He always kept his daily reckonings,
Each mark a new discovery, fresh clues
Towards the total of his evidence.

When all his search was done and he erased
The tell-tale chalk marks from his cupboard door,
He told me, Jasper, walking in the Close
Had witnessed Durdles tapping at the tomb,
And for a moment stopped, as thunderstruck
To find the mason seeking evidence
Of interference with the monument.

That afternoon the music master went
To town and drugged his growing consciousness
Of guilt discovered, in the opium den;
And Bazzard, having quickly followed him,
That night, watched with the seller of the drug,
And heard his incoherent talk of Ned,
His dreamy disconnected mutterings
Of fellow travellers; of one who reached
His journey's end while yet in Cloisterham.

By dint of much persuasion, Bazzard learned
From this misguided woman of the den,
This opium-mixer, what these ravings meant,
And for his further knowledge stayed the night
To hear the wordy passages, which came
As Jasper slowly gained his consciousness.
For, in the exit from the drunken sleep,
One hears the substance of the nightly dream
More certain than before deep slumber comes.

So, hidden by the filthy tattered rags
That passed for curtains in that loathsome place,
He heard the wand'ring babblings of Malays,
The oaths of sailors quarrelling at sea,
Then all sank down amid the noisome hush.

At dawn there was a querulous muttering
Which died down into silence; then a groan
Which spoke of mental pain, and finally
The fev'rish words, which, uncontrolled by will,
Gave Bazzard all the thoughts of Jasper's mind.

He spoke of comrades in a lonely place
Retracing through the blackness of the night
The paths which they had traversed long before;
Of hollow depths with seeming vacancy,
Which echoed sounds, as though one lying there
Was struggling with a mortal enemy,
A hideous, ghastly struggle to the death.

The drunkard shuddered, leaning on one arm,
Then, as delirium passed to waking thought,
He sat upright and looked around the den,
Surveying with dull eye the coming dawn,
As through discolored window panes it pierced,
The merest shadow of th' approaching morn.

The opium woman coaxed him, in a voice
That scarce concealed malicious purposes,
And sounded likewise yet more villainous
By reason of its harsh and rasping tone.
Yet he cared nought for this, but suddenly,
As though the substance of his dream returned
To goad him with the added thought, that here
He had divulged the secrets of the grave,
He rose and took his leave without a word.

Then Bazzard also, journeyed home, to add
One more long mark behind the cupboard door.

To this convincing evidence remained
One only further witness for the crime,

The Deputy, and he retained the news
Concerning Jasper on that Christmas Eve,
Till it accumulated increment
In value, and a price equivalent
To Bazzard's appetite for tragic clues.

The night, before that Edwin disappeared,
The lurking Deputy had walked abroad
On chance that Durdles might be visiting
The Traveller's Two Penny for a Christmas Glass,
And knowing that of late he frequented
The old cathedral after dark to see
That all was safely and securely locked,
The imp of mischief wandered forth a while
To see if Durdles was at home or not.

When near the mason's house he saw a man,
Who carried something like a bulky sack
Across one shoulder; so he followed him
And saw him enter the Cathedral Close,
But afterwards the man was lost to view.
So near the gate the Deputy took post,
And saw the prowling man with empty sack
Pass out and go towards the village inn.
When presently he came again, the sack
Was carried as before, a heavy load
Across one shoulder causing him to stoop.
This time the Deputy came further in,
And there before the newly graven vault
Saw Jasper halt and slowly disappear.

He gave no warning 'widdy' on that night,
But travelled home as quickly as he could;
For rumor had it, there was once a girl,
A young thing, scarcely parted with her teens,
Who loved, and when her lover died, she pined,

And all desire of living went from her,
And she would nightly walk among the graves;
And on one winter morn they found her dead,
Prostrate upon the turf where he was laid

This tale the Deputy had oft been told
With this addition, that she often came
In ghostly ceremonies to watch the grave,
And moan the sorrow of her early loss.
This made him chary of recalling what
He'd seen that night, and not till Bazzard bribed
With extra coin would he recount the tale.

Thus we gathered up the story, linking
Together all the evidence of guilt.

One thing remained, and that was to secure
The privilege of ent'ring Sapsea's vault
But this the pompous mayor would not allow,
Till driven to extremes;

So sure I was

That Jasper was the agent of the crime,
I took a warrant out for his arrest,
And so compelled the mayor to furnish us
With means so that we could inspect the tomb;
For this as evidence upon the case
Was necessary in the proof of guilt.
Accordingly we searched the vault for proof
Of Jasper having entered it that night.
We found inside the stone sarcophagus
Some quicklime, which the auctioneer had not,
—So he averred—placed there at any time.

When Durdles worked upon it with his spade,
He came across the body, which we knew
From Rosa's ring to be the corpse of Ned;
The scarf of Jasper lay around his throat,
But no one would have recognised the lad,
So surely had the quicklime done its work.

And Jasper hangs tomorrow, sentence given
Upon my one and only case in crime.
The ring, I gave to Tartar, and it shines
Upon dear Rosa's finger, not so bright
As do her eyes in evening twilight glow,
So like her mother's in the days that were.



SAPSEA



TWO PEOPLE of the Cloisterham folk
Have rightly judged the value of my
thought;
John Jasper, music teacher in the town,
And Ethelinda, late my wife, who taught
The parallel establishment to that
We call the Nun's House, and who so revered
The Pirean Spring, as current in my mind,
That, "O Thou," were the only words she found
For utterance, so great the awe she felt
When I proposed she elevate her state

'Tis strange, that none should understand my mind
But two, and these two teachers, one now dead
A twelvemonth, and the other waiting death,
Condemned by evidence of Grewgious' clerk.

Had Ethelinda lived, she would have prized
My noble exposition of the law
In which I judged this Landless criminal.
She was a lady who respected mind,
And knew the qualities of intellect,
As in our common knowledge are contained;
And since she saw their true development
In this my character, was overcome
With awe, and having found the fallacy
Of teaching, when, as pupil, she could learn
So much from daily discourse at my home,
Made one with me, if that were possible.

Had Ethelinda lived, she would have known
How just my judgment was in Jasper's case,
How my decision fixed the criminal.
She would have spread abroad my evidence
Among the lesser folk of Cloisterham,
And thus by popular decree, this man,
Who now awaits his death by course of law,
Would have been freed, to use his influence
As heretofore, for good in general,
And in particular, for my repute.

John Jasper's innocence I here avow,
E'en though I stand alone among the crowd,
Who base their verdict on the evidence
Of Datchery.

'Twas Landless slew young Drood,
But this my witness has but little weight
Now that the judge, the mouthpiece of the law,
Has sentenced Jasper, most unhappy fate.

He was a friend who understood my worth,
Appreciated all my work as mayor,
And with a full esteem, revered my plan
For the inscription on the monument
Of Ethelinda; with his talents too
He was reserved, so modest in the light
Of my attainment, better quality
Than any in a man so young in years,
With all the vista of his future's hope
Appearing on the fringe of his career.

Far different from my backward glance, across
The difficult achievements I have won,
My chiefest gain the power to litigate,
To use my knowledge of all previous torts,
To sift the evidence in crime, and so
Prepare the case and give my judgment clear.

Since I was made a mayor six years ago,
My habit and delight in reading law,
As far as my position warranted,
Was no less urgent than my business
As auctioneer; but duty, paramount
In all my schemes for bettering my kind,
Demanded I should know the case in hand,
As well as instances supporting my
Decision.

In the case of Landless' crime
(I cannot look upon it otherwise),
The lawyer Grewgious, working for his ward,
Made light of all my proofs, and took the ground
That circumstantial evidence was not
A proof, but probability of guilt.
He placed his proof upon a certain ring,
A token of engagement, which he said
He gave to Drood to give to Rosa Bud.
This ring established Drood's identity,
When in the vault the quicklime had destroyed
All other marks whereby Drood might be known.

Thus Grewgious reasoned, throwing all the weight
Of evidence upon the simple fact
That this engagement ring was given to Drood,
And since the ring was found within the tomb.
The corpse was that of Drood whom Jasper slew,
If we may take the verdict of the law.

Such evidence is based on circumstance,
Brings no conviction, lacks the truth of fact;
He takes the course which he condemns in me;
Then both our proofs are merely probable.
You see I take his ground of reasoning,
As one who weighs opponent's arguments,
Thereby to make more certain his defeat.

'Tis true, there may be fallacies to meet
In all the evidence of circumstance;
At best it is a mere hypothesis
Petitio Principii in fact;
So here we stand upon an even ground,
And must establish certainty of proof
Upon another source of evidence;
And here I take it tells the greater weight
Of my experience as city mayor,
My knowledge of the history of torts.

This lawyer Grewgious is a clerk of rents,
Has never served as counsel in a case,
Knows not the first thing of the course of law,
Where crime is fixed upon the criminal.
Besides, he has in office work been so
Confined, so shut in from the world's affairs,
Where men know men through constant human touch,
That he has no experience on which
To base conclusions.

On the other hand,

My life since boyhood has been spent with men,
In all the highways of prosperity,
And all the bylanes of their misery.
'Tis true I have not travelled, but the world
Has come to me; my buyers in the mart
Are men from every nation under heaven,
The black and tawny from the torrid zone,
Who show me life in all its primitive
And early stages of development.
With them there are the yellow Japanese,
More skilled in bidding for my household wares,
The knick-knacks that embellish cottages.
Then there are all the races of the whites,
Who with black and yellow hob-nob in my sales

These delegates of nations come to me
And see our English customs in my rooms;
I learned from them outlandish instances
Of government, and states inferior
To that in England, and they get from me
The wisdom of the civilized;

besides,

I buy from customers who vend their goods
In London shops, quaintly concealed within
The narrow confines of an East End street,
A gibbering crowd, who show with palsied hands
A Queen Anne or a Jacobean Chair,
And bray their auctions in an atmosphere
Of fetid breath from lungs of Jews and Turks,
Dock hands and sailors, women almost nude,
And children, gleeful in the Hide-and-Seek
They play around the goods that line the walls.

Then see my house; my trophies prove the fact
That though in life I have not travelled much,
Yet I have seen the world with open eyes;
Mahomet and his mountain once again.
This clock bought from a Frenchman in the town,
Brought Paris to me with its gaiety.
See this young Cupid painted on the dial,
Embracing Psyche in a bed of flowers;
Love's perfect union with the perfect mind,
Such love had Ethelinda years ago.
This china also taught me of Canton.
Pekin and Nankin likewise have I seen;
Japan and Egypt and the Eastern Seas,
Where sandalwood perfumes the tropic air.

So much of life has trade thus brought to me,
That I have learned to look upon a man,
And know his character, just as I scan
My wares and know their value by the stamp,
That indicates their make and origin.

I judged John Jasper as a man of worth,
Reserved perhaps, but guileless as a nun.
Young Edwin Drood and he were bosom friends;
Yet more, this Jasper had an uncle's love,
Most evident to any who observed
Their genial concourse at the Gate House rooms;
His nephew was his only relative,
And on occasion, Edwin would enjoy
A double harmony in visiting
An uncle, and a blushing bride-to-be.

Then as it was my duty to make known
Myself to all the citizens in town,
Invited Jasper's knowledge of the arts,
To get his full approval on the work
I had in hand for Ethelinda's tomb;
And in this intercourse, though very brief,
Found time to study him who stands condemned
By wrongful evidence of Datchery.

I well remember him that afternoon;
He had a fervent admiration, stood
As one astounded at my neat design
For Ethelinda's monument; he then
Stepped back a pace or two as critics do
Before a painting in th' Academy.
For form and style must make direct appeal,
Not only to the eye, but to the mind,
Aesthetic taste assisting intellect.

A rare contrast to him, the stone mason,
Who likewise came to see the Epitaph,
And measure for the churchyard monument
A churlish man he is, rough and uncouth,
A mason of the bygone age, unlearned
In anything external to his craft.

Stone cutting is his work from year to year,
Among the graves he finds his intercourse;
And moss-grown is he, sodden like his graves;
Calls "rheumatism" by another name,
'Tis "Tombatism," such his ignorance,
He's but mechanical, knows not the art
He is employed upon in this my work.
Still Jasper thinks the character is quaint,
And useful for research upon the Tower.

That other—Landless—whom I have accused,
And steadfastly remain in my belief
That he was criminal in this foul act,
Was of a sullen disposition, given
To moody wanderings, intent on harm
To Drood; for witness his first battery
Of heated words, when Jasper entertained
Him in his rooms; why there was felony,
Resolved and almost carried to the act,
Had not this Jasper stood between them both,
Compelling each to take the other's hand
In friendship.

In the course of law in France,
They always say, "Cherchez la Femme," when first
They look around for evidence, for there
In woman lies the cause of half the crime
Committed; let us borrow wisdom then
And seek the woman in this case of Drood.
Here's Rosa Bud, old Grewgious' pretty ward,
'Tis known that Landless fell a ready prey
To Rosa's charms, though Edwin Drood was sworn
Her future husband; there was jealousy
Immediately, and this in such a man
As Landless, fiery when he is aroused,
Brought bloody purpose to his jealous mood.

Thus knowing these two men, their tendencies,
And how they each were given to Edwin Drood,
I formed my first hypothesis, and on
Assumptions, gave instructions for the men
To drag the river, thinking Landless slew
His victim, after leaving Jasper's room.
There was no very sure success in this,
But in the storm of rain the waters rose,
And no doubt made the dragging difficult.

I cannot see this thing in any other light,
Nor yet believe, though Grewgious found the ring
Inside the tomb, and by it knew the corpse,
That Drood was buried there; there's some mistake,
A plot between the lawyer and his man,
In which they bribed old Durdles to the point
Of disinterring some late buried corpse,
And putting it in Ethelinda's vault.
Such tricks have been performed ere now,
And Grewgious had his reasons manifold
For wishing to establish guilt on one
Who made advances to his pretty ward.
'Tis said he loved her mother years ago,
And perhaps he loves the daughter in her place.

Yet I must not abuse the law's decree,
The constitution must inviolate
Be kept, else I, who sit as magistrate,
Drink my own criticism of the law.

I only grieve that one of Jasper's mould,
So young, so promising, and so devout,
Should sacrifice this life's experience,
Should in his verdant years give up all claim
To due fruition, his survey o'er the field
Unmarked by prints of great acclaim, receipt
For services ere interest has come
To show the increase of his life's account.

My reputation too has suffered loss,
And this beyond all other ground for grief
Has left me with the vestige of esteem.
Where I should have a reverence profound
From those who knew me both as auctioneer
And mayor, I have the scorn of Cloisterham,
Which burrows underneath my good repute,
And withers in its prime the love I had.

Had Ethelinda lived, my power had not
Thus suddenly departed from my grasp.
Yet so the world records the ill-success
Of one, and in the record, stains the name
Of others who were wont to be his friends.



ROSA



IS TWELVE months since poor Edwin
disappeared,
Twelve long months, longer than I
yet have known,
And all filled with a tense expectancy
That Edwin would appear as swallows
do,

Without forewarning of his entering.
But when the fields, robed in their livery
Of celandine and glowing buttercups,
Those Kentish fields, where first I met with Ned,
Passed from their summer to the sombre fall,
I knew that Edwin would return no more.

So I am reconciled; I never loved
As one must do if marriage be the goal.
Poor Edwin was so formal in his love,
So bound by pure convention that I knew
He lacked the one wild thrilling ecstasy
Which indicates the boiling earnestness
Of passion; could I kiss the formal kiss
Miss Twinkleton delights in, take the hand,
Embrace, look to the rising moon, and sigh
My soul out in an ecstasy of breath,
When he loved by the rule his father left.
Nay! loved me as a father, patronised
My moods; all which, in quiet solitude
I thought about and wept.

And then there came

The final preparation for the rite
Of marriage, which would make me wife indeed.
I knew that Edwin would not take the step,
Dissolve the contract, cross his father's will,
He was so bound in honor to the wish
His father had. My duty then to turn
The course before the final goal was reached,
No gladsome task, yet right it was to me.

On Christmas Eve, the night he disappeared,
We each unbosomed, telling candidly
Our inmost thoughts; my wish to be as friend,
As sister is to brother, and no more,
Brought truth to him, the truth that I could be
No wife: the thought still makes me weep,
So lenient he was, yet knowing all,
For I had but uncovered his own heart,
Revealing truth to him, which he had scarce
In honor dared confess to his own soul.

When I look back and dream those days again,
In light of what I since have learned, I know
That he as architect, regarded me
But as an ornament, to beautify,
Which he would place upon the capital
Of his design. He thought in terms of art,
When he took me into his scheme of things,
Of geometric laws applied to stone,
And not of attributes of human love.

I never had a mother to instruct
My growing years, to tell me of my kind,
The mystery of being, and to teach
The sanctity of love in married life.
My father, too, I well remember him

As one bowed down by grief since mother died,
No reconciliation in me as her child,
No thread of contact with the wider world,
Save in the friendship of the elder Drood,
And that he used to circumvent my path,
My course of life: my memory can scarce
Recall a happy moment that he shared
Alone with me: and yet I cannot blame
With bitter words a love that was so deep
So firmly rooted in companionship,
That death to her was likewise death to him.

Then Grewgious came, my guardian and my friend,
So tender, yet so foolish in his way
Of doing good, so formal, though I knew
By instinct as it were, the wish he had
To serve me to the uttermost; he loved
My mother in her early maidenhood,
And from that love there sprang his care for me,
Which I have cherished in my loneliness
Of spirit, as a pearl of greatest price.

Though he preferred to talk of business,
In terms of money, so much for my board,
My room so much, and then my latest gown,
I had to laugh at him, yet still I saw
The kindness that moved beneath his frown,
The solid heart that underlay the rough
And angular exterior; so he
Devised my life, or rather let me plan
My own soul's path, in this more like a sire
Than he who was my father in the flesh.

In the Cathedral there's a vacancy,
An empty niche, where stood an old time saint,
One, who in life, was talked of and revered,

And who, in death, was raised so in esteem,
That there he stood, beside the leper's squint,
And they who in time past were deemed unclean,
Might take one crumb of comfort from the form
The outward semblance of a holy man.
And many a nun in meditation pure,
Resolved to cleanse her life from worldly taint,
By contemplation of the saintly face.

Then later on, there came iconoclasts,
Who stripped the church of all its beauties rare,
And saints stepped humbly down to earth again.
So in my heart I feel the empty place,
Which in his lifetime, Edwin filled, as friend.

Life's spectrum is the band of earthly friends,
One taken, leaves forever vacancy,
Which no new fellowship can ever fill;
Nor can the radiance of another soul
Complete the harmony that once was there.
Since Edwin's death I feel my youth has dropped
Away from me, that he, my childhood's mate,
The one link to my days of playfulness,
Had claimed the years which we together shared.

How can I speak of him who, guilty, lies
Within a felon's cell, condemned to die;
He who in blood was next of kin to Ned,
And should have had the greater care for him.
I know so little that I cannot judge
Between men as I ought; my father was
No aid in this to my untutored years,
Nor Edwin, seeing he was immature,
No wisdom of the serpent, for he had
But little contact with the school of life.
Then Grewgious—these three only have I known.

How could I then interpret Jasper's moods,
Weigh in the balances his direful acts,
Except by knowledge of the guile of men?

'Twas my first dread of him that drove me close
To Edwin for protection, such as he
Alone could give; for impulse of this kind
There is no reason, but a mortal fear;
Simplicity has no strong argument,
Nor ignorance a sword, to brave deceit.

One gift John Jasper had, as boy and man,
Which found its scope in the cathedral choir;
A singer of God's praises in the church,
Where robed in white, as angels are in heaven,
He sang in adoration of the Lamb,
Of Sacrifice, and God-like qualities,
Which give to man the attributes of God.

It were a fault in Nature, should the crow
Attempt to soothe the summer night with song;
Or eagle greet the dawn with melody;
Or hawk, within the temples of the grove,
Break evening's quiet with a rapturous note,
It is not given to wild and ravenous birds
To please with vocal song, but to the mild
And docile, such as thrush or nightingale.
Man only, of the creatures in the world,
Is amiably ravenous, and sings
A soft accompaniment to villainy.

So Jasper sang, while brooding o'er his crime,
Beguiling all the priests of Cloisterham,
That they in adulation of his art,
Accounted him a jewel in the church.
These ministers—in God's room—are so far
From knowing human error in the soul;

They try to bring God down to mortal earth,
And not to raise men to immortal God.

In early life, I knew of Jasper's wrong
As man, not merely in this final act
For which men justly judge him criminal,
But also in a vicious tendency
Developed through the green and tender years,
And fostered by a jealous appetite.

When in my maidenhood, my father came
To visit Drood, and Jasper was a guest,
And for their better converse, they would send
Us out to play, he—Jasper—stood apart,
In sullen mood, while Edwin took the lead,
Inviting me to see the thrush's nest,
Lodged in the hawthorn, by the mossy barn;
Or where the swift had built beneath the eaves,
Secure against the storm of wind and rain.

There was a hawk's nest, in the tallest elm,
In which the young were just about to fly,
And Edwin, boy-like climbed the tempting tree,
Secured one fluffy bird from out the nest,
And brought it down to give me as my own.

But Jasper, greedy of my ready praise,
Both of the feat, and also for the gift,
Took from his hand the squalling bird of prey,
And, having killed it, threw it on the turf.
Then looking at his nephew with a look
That flashed the hatred of his burning soul,
Exclaimed: "My fingers have been formed for this,
For strangling what you would with her enjoy."
At this he burst into a flood of tears,
And fell upon the turf beside the hawk.

One other time, years after, when the scent
Of lilac bloom perfumed the village air,
And all the cottages were gay with flowers,
He overtook me in a shaded lane
And grasped my hand, and talked with such a fire
Of utterance, of love, and his desire
To have me for his wife, in spite of Ned
And our engagement, that my senses fled,
Confounded by the zest of his attack.
Or love or vicious passion might it be,
He wrought confusion in my powers
A violent abhorrence in my veins
Yet no resistance had I to his will.

One more experience I must here relate,
The memory of which stays with me yet;
By night it haunts my dreaming memories,
And stirs the dread I thought was laid to rest;
The sundial in the garden of the school,
And garden seat, are always present there,
And o'er them, comes the shadow of his form,
The dark eclipse upon the garden dial,
His form, in black, his features darker still,
Fall on my troubled dreaming consciousness.

I've heard from soldiers, wounded in the wars,
That they in dreams, fight with the French again,
Strained to the uttermost, so firmly fixed
Is their attention on the charging foe.

'Twas in the ripening season of the year,
When Kentish fruit trees laden, bend to earth,
And gardens, burdened with their rich excess,
Tempt wandering pilgrims from the dusty town,
As in that far off time, the pilgrimage
To Thomas Becket's tomb, brought many new
And unknown faces to the monastery;

So travellers come, the Nun's House to survey,
Where now Miss Twinkleton, the principal,
Guides other novices, through other paths,
Than those prepared for nuns in Chaucer's time.

It was the season when the college girls
Flock to their homes like rooks at evening time,
And I was left alone; Miss Twinkleton,
One afternoon had yielded to the lure
Of summer-time, the shade of distant woods,
The berries on the sportive brambles wild,
And to the call of merry picnickers.

That afternoon John Jasper visited
The school, enquiring if I stayed within.
At once the dread of him came back to me,
And for a lesser evil bade him wait,
And I would see him by the garden seat.
The school I thought, was too confined a space
To hear the current of his wicked plea.

He stood beside the sundial, where the shade,
Cast by his presence, gave a deeper gloom,
Than that laid by the thicket, or the grove -
Or when the thundercloud looms in the west;
But darker still he seemed, in mourning clothes,
For such he wore, in memory of poor Ned.

I sat upon the garden seat, and he
Reached forth to take my hand; I drew it back,
As if by instinct knowing his intent.
Some minutes, long as years, passed, while his eye
Burned in my consciousness; then he began:
"I have been waiting for you, several months,
To send for me, to teach you once again;
Your guardian said you had but ceased awhile,
Will you resume the music as before?"

I told him I would never learn again
From him; thereat his anger and his love
(If such a name could be applied to that
Which moved the current of his villainy),
Strove each for mastery; he threatened harm
To others; mixed with that breathing menace,
The stormcloud with the rainbow at its edge,
Were violent protestations of his love,
Which I reminded him, with full disdain,
Were false and wicked, in that oftentimes,
He had declared himself, while Ned was here.

The ardor of my speech, and heated mien,
No way repelled, but gave his utterance
New fervency; he called me beautiful
Enchanter, charming sorceress, sweet witch,
At which, nonplussed, and overcome with shame,
I rose to leave; his uncontrolled excess
Of passion, rose to that extremity,
Where anger, love, and hate, malice and rage
Mixed in the madness of his glowing eyes,
Red hot before my breath of righteous scorn.

His madness gave a license to his tongue,
That with confession, threats of dire intent
Poured from his lips; that had his love for Ned
Been one thin silken thread less strong, he would
Have swept him from my side; he would secure
My love, in spite of all the ties of kin,
The sacred bonds of brotherhood; no means
Would stay his hand, whereby a rival love
Would live, accepted by my smile; he spoke
Of Landless, and the evidence which long
Hung as an accusation on his head.
Were he an innocent and guileless man,
Such evidence would take him to his death.

I told him, Landless was no love of mine,
That he had never breathed his suit to me.
But this was not enough to check his hate;
He mentioned Helena, my dearest friend,
Her reputation, and the evil stain,
Should law condemn her brother to be hung.

At last I saw the evil of his mind,
Through the confusion he had wrought in mine,
And with the cognisance of what he meant,
To bring upon th' unhappy Landlesses,
All horror at his foul and murd'rous soul
Swept through my being like the rush of death
Upon the victim of catastrophe.

Yet even here he made his bad design
Appear the better for his purposes;
His oath to find the murderer of Ned,
His great fidelity to his dear boy;
The great offence of suitors for my hand;
His six long months of labor for revenge,
All these in sacrifice he would renounce,
If I would but accept his humble plea.
So great a vehemence attended this
Appeal to me, to save both them and him,
That I was paralysed, abhorrence-bound,
So strong his influence upon the sense.

As when one comes from out a death-like swoon,
The horror of the cause comes back again
With double power, so from my seeming trance,
I woke to fear most terrible and strong;
There stood John Jasper, ghastly sinister,
And all I know is that I fled away.

Awakening, I found myself upon
My bed; but how I came there was unknown,

Till on enquiry from the buxom maid,
She said she'd found me fainting on the stairs,
And thinking it was due to summer heat,
Had brought me to my room and left me there.
One thought alone, employed my tired mind,
And that to get away from Cloisterham.
I rose and dressed, and hurried out, to see
The driver mounting on the omnibus.
I called to him, not caring howso'er
The passengers would look upon my plight.
Once in the London train, I took the seat
Most distant from the passers-by.
Not till the train moved did I feel secure,
And then for weariness, I wept aloud.

As wounded birds that from the fowler flee,
With broken wing into the covert gloom,
And wait there till the danger had gone past,
Forgetting all their former flights in air,
Till with new strength, they try their wings again,
So I sought out a secret hiding place
With Mr. Grewgious, hoping there to gain
A lodging from the torment of this man.

My guardian heard the story of my fright
With legal sympathy; picked every fact
For nurture of the body of his proof,
Repeating all the details, till they formed
A chain, each link a fact in memory.

For many days I could not reconcile
Myself to look upon the chorister
As murderer; but as John Jasper's words
Were slowly borne in on my clearer brain,
The wicked deed in all its ruthlessness
Was patent to my conscience.

BAZZARD



WOULD that Garrick were alive today
To play my "Jasper" to the thronging
crowds

Who now applaud Macready on the
stage,

And split the stuffy air of Drury Lane

With plaudits for his wild and boisterous art.

Such acting doth befit the lesser gods,

Who know Jove only by his thunderbolt,

And scant the wisdom of the Deity,

The justice which did point destruction out.

What do they know of Hamlet but the fray,

Or of Macbeth, beyond the passages

Of arms? Their zeal doth wax the more, the more

They see the crimson flow, the march of death,

The wild acclaim of boisterous sentiment,

The stir of action that accompanies

A great and passion-searching theme; so art

Doth render tragedy a thing of naught.

Macready panders to the narrow minds

Who pay their coin as shoppers in the Mart,

For three long hours of blood-bespattered thrills.

But not so Garrick; in his glowing soul

There shone the genius of coincidence

In character, and in his infinite

Variety of mind cast radiance

Of gleaming beauty on the poet's thought.

He was fair Nature's own interpreter,
A mirror to the mind in tragedy,
Depicting motive current in the brain,
And human thought in origin and source.
He loved the terror and the agony,
The darkening of consciousness that comes
Upon the mind when wrong is first conceived,
And conflict rises on the crest of thought.

The actor's business is to trace the paths
Along which mind has travelled ere it gain
The goal, or tragedy or comedy,
Whate'er it be, and not confine the part
To mere indulgence of the final act;
The conflict as we see in tragedy
Is greatest shadowed in the early acts.

This have I striven in my first-born play,
"The Thorn of Keen Anxiety", to show
(*Si parva licet componere magnis*),
The small beginnings of the tragic mood,
Those elements of chance in human mind,
Which, waiting on the breath of circumstance,
Determine tragedy in earth-born souls.

Of old such circumstances were ascribed
To Fate; th' immortal gods took cognisance
Of men and planned their soul's path on the earth.
For witness Oedipus who slew his sire,
And wandered through an earthly Erebus,
Woe-burdened, till Jove took him from his pain.

"All powerful God" once prayed Euripides,
"Send Light to men that they may know whence come
Their ills, and how avoid them when they come."
So prayed he, knowing well the gods and fate
Had less to do with men's affairs than Man.

He brought the tragic theme close down to earth,
That men with ears attuned, could hear the wheel
And vibrant engine of their own design
Grind out the wrongs they suffer, and the woes
They labor in their blindness to avoid.

So Tragedy was lifted from the lap
Of Jupiter, and oracles forsook
The Grove, and men laid all their earthly woes
On Man, nor sought th' Olympian tribunal.

Then Shakespeare took the word and made us men,
And placed them in the garden of his thought,
And gave them passions to disturb their souls.
So with the highest motives issued forth
Pale resolution and a false respect;
For witness Hamlet, vanquished by his mind,
And Brutus, victim of his good resolve.
There's tragedy, the deepest that we know,
When from a noble, god-like attribute
Compounded with the baser human stuff
There rise the devious qualities of kind,
War and destruction, pestilence and death;
Not that the fire is less Promethean
When on Man's altars, but that sacrifice
Is in the union of the god in man.
"For who unless a god can hope to pass
All his allotted life without some pain."

So pass my cherished thoughts, and once again
I wish the Lichfield genius were alive
To show my "Jasper" to a London house.

He left his Midland home to study law,
And I likewise, my father's Norfolk farm.
He threw away the husks of law, and turned
To tragedy, and I—oh cease this heart,

I'm too presumptuous in comparison,
Too prodigal with hope, I keep alive
By feeding off the crumbs this lawyer drops,
While all my hopes are in my tragedy.

I cannot blame old Grewgious for his lack;
He saved me from starvation, when in dread
I left my father to his corn and beeves,
But lawyers have no hours to dream away,
No time for aught but briefs and caveats,
So practical a world is theirs, so bare
A field in which intelligence may roam,
That wonder withers in the warmth of day.

Some few of us frequent the London stage,
And ask for interviews with managers,
And while Macready roars soliloquies,
We stand and wait, regaling time and tide
With panegyrics to each others worth.

'Tis well that Grewgious understands my whim,
And my indifference for business,
Else had I never been his clerk at all.
He humors me and calls me a misfit,
But has respect for this my tragedy,
This "Jasper" which he helped me to compose.

As legal guardian of Rosa Bud
He had a ripened interest in affairs
That circumscribed her every happiness,
But chiefly in her part with Edwin Drood,
And on his disappearance Christmas Eve;
For as the story ran, this architect
Was murdered by a rival, Landless named,
But Grewgious swore that Jasper did the deed.
Then wanting proof, employed my services.
'Twas not entirely his initial thought,

For I had hoped to meet a tragic case,
One worthy of the study, and had broached
The subject to him, so we joined our plans,
He working for the evidence in court,
And I for tragedy upon the stage.
Yet seeing he was known in Cloisterham,
He made suggestion that I go disguised.

I had the honor once some few years back
To play in amateur theatricals,
And took the part of one called Datchery,
An idle dog, who lived upon his means,
A single buffer and a foolish crank
On architecture, yet a kindly soul.
He was supposed to be a refugee
From France whose mental balance had been lost
By persecution under French revolt.

This part I'd played so often that the role
Was second nature to me, once disguised
In clothes that should have been a larger size
So tight they were, as though made for a count
Retired but lately from his regiment;
With wig and all accoutrements to match
I entered Cloisterham and by good luck
Met Deputy and Jasper, with the Mayor,
And afterwards the lady who purveyed
The opium, the Princess, Deputy
Had styled her, Princess Puffer of the Jacks.

How well their names and characters are given
To tragedy, so suited to the parts
They played; for so it seems in every run
Of life. Experience is doubly bare
And life runs in a conduit where the stream
Of being has no sparkle in its course;

Where there's no rub of new acquaintanceship
No lowering of the bars to let the world
With all variety flow gladly in.

When on my father's farm, I knew three men,
And only three, who fringed my intercourse.
These three were seasoned to the soil they tilled
Belonging to the farms as did the kine -
Which roamed the fields, but limited by hedge
And ditch; tradition had them in its grip;
They would salute the squire, attend the church,
And treat his reverence as he were a god;
Take all opinion from the pulpit step
And buzz of rights when all the right they had
Was humbly to be bound by village law
They'd work from sunrise unto dark for hire
That scarce would keep the soul from hell.

Perchance

My life had been as theirs, as limited,
Had not some crack of doom propelled me forth,
Some budding of new life from out the old,
Some passing of the soul's profound eclipse.

These many months have brought me new desires,
New scenes, new men aglow with all the fire
Of impulse reaching forth in that new birth
Of Spirit brooding o'er a vast abyss
To bring creation to the world again.

Oh God, I tremble in the wake of Being;
Thou hast but now passed by this holy place,
For I perceive the glory that is Thine
Rest pendant on the creatures of Thine hand.
Creation was not all original,
Some primal essence moves the world today,
Else had I lingered on my father's farm,
And not felt passion in a greater hope

So great a trust have I in this new life
Complete in all imaginings and dreams,
That instants bear the weight of hoary years,
And momentary visions lift the veil
Which hides the glowing radiance of Truth.

But what is Truth? As Grewgious wisely said
To me when first that Edwin Drood was killed;
Truth is the outcome of the facts, the end
Of argument, the one conclusion
That follows from the premises, so that
Truth runs as Barbara or Celarent
The universals of logicians.
He sees Truth as a summary of facts,
And facts to him are classified in life
As good or bad according to the law;
His mind is focussed on legality.

That Jasper did the deed 'gainst Edwin Drood
Is one eternal element of Truth,
And that is all the Truth in his regard.
What business has the law with those long years
Of contemplation, mental strain, and urge
Of soul towards this tragic circumstance.
He sees one thin ray of the beam of Truth,
And leaves Life's fevered spectrum unobserved.
And Sapsea likewise follows his one thread,
A thin frail gossamer, a spider's work,
The labor of a dewy summer night,
Neglecting all the fever of the Spring.

What wisdom then runs through their logic mill,
If when they single out a minute grain
To grind for mental food, the fruitful field
Is left to drop its fulness back to earth—
And waving fields sing once again the tale

Of Midas' ears; if this be truth to them
Then barba tenus sapientes rule
The wisdom of our wonder-laden world.

Oh barren day, when sages cast the earth
Into a crucible, and put the stuff
That bears Creation in the class with clay.
They reckon Jasper's deed but as a deed,
A single thing remote from intercourse,
And not as burden on the social race.
What comet gleams but through the firmament
A thousand sea-girt isles take up the glow,
What star shines in its course but untold orbs,
Receive the Radiance if its silver sheen.

So all things, foul or fair, reveal the vast
And measureless abyss of being, where
Creation broods, and every act of life
Has origin and source far backward in the mist
Of years.

The tragedy that Shakespeare wrote
Unveils the fundamental scheme of things,
Projects Man's thought in ever widening spheres
Through that vast comprehensive sum of life,
To origins of impulse, and the quick
Desires from which the buds of conduct burst
To bloom.

This Jasper, Singer-Criminal,
So gifted as men pass in mortal life;
This Psalmist-Murderer, whose melody
Soothed solemn priests and pious worshippers,
Who carried Heaven and Hell as freight on earth,
Nor eased the torture of these two extremes
By any happy mean; this chanting fiend,
Torn 'twixt Hell's tether and the fiery steeds
That took Elijah to the skies; what hap
Confused the current of his smooth career?

What long array of feelings contrary
Have vexed the progress of his childhood's years?
Where smiles, love-laden, should have welcomed home
His ready steps, and soothed the bitter tear
Provoked o'er lesson books; where father's hand
In guidance should have led the boy away
From tempest and the storm of injured soul,
There cold indifference crystallized his wrongs,
And thrust him from the circle of his kind.

There was the germ of bitter tragedy,
When foster parents ignorantly drove
His soul into a barren wilderness,
Whence Ishmael-like, he turned revengeful hand
Against all other men, for other men
Were likewise contrary to him; so, bound
In bondage to vindictive tendency,
And loosed from freedom of the social law,
He, single and alone, drew forth the sword
Against the universal law of kind.

Then Edwin crossed th' arena of his thought,
And Jasper hated him for love of her
To whom Drood was affianced, Rosa Bud,
These two were lovers by their father's word,
Yet knew not love as passion to the death,
For so imperative their sires' decree
They thought obedience the greater law.

Here blossomed forth new matter for his hate,
Here bloomed a further conflict in the soul;
Not only did he find himself alone
Outside the pale of human sympathy,
But one bright avenue for his return,
At its appearance proved a false mirage.
The deep profound, the mystery of love

Revealed to him his sacred rights as man,
And where the fount burst in his wilderness,
His soul's upheaval through the rocky cleft,
There at the vent, the spring was parched and dry.

So years accumulated store of rage
And enmity, and parallel with growth
Of hostile aims there grew a love of Art,
The appeal of music and of melody,
These blossomed; though together in one soul,
United in division, each alone
Yet moving through development, the one
Hell-born the other God-inspired,
They reached their destiny that Christmas Eve.

No chance event, for greater growth of good
And final overthrow of evil happened here,
For Jasper had no love enchantment, as
Tannhauser; witness that great musical
Interpretation of the good and ill
In Wagner's Opera, where riot reigns,
But through the ruin runs a melody
Of velvet softness, bearing latent life,
And Chaos ceases as this Pilgrim's Song
Increases in triumphal overture.

So Jasper slew his nephew in the Close,
And in the Choir, a few hours following,
He sang of goodwill, peace among all men.

The end of this unhappy murder case
Brings ripe conclusion to the tragedy.
This part Macready would delight to play,
The bluster of the scene beside the Church,
The strangling and the stormy violence,
The tragic attitude to make appeal
To costers in the upper balconies.

But Garrick with no turbulent acclaim
Would shew John Jasper's soul in agony,
The struggle of th' Almighty God in Man,
Would give the mental conflict through the scenes,
And so would bring katharsis to the mob,
More certain than by modern ecstasy
Of stir and tumult in the theatre.

Then at the lowering of the colored screen,
When actors turn to common paths again,
And costers troop to narrow foggy lanes
To tell the tale beside the garret fire
(So brood I o'er the possible success
Of this new light which I have fanned to flame),
What follows? Can we purge the human soul,
Take out the virus from imaginings,
And cleanse the passions of their poisonous stuff
By shows of dire calamity? Here pause
The problems of our human intercourse.
"Send Light to men" thus prayed Euripides,
"More Light t' avoid the evils when they come."



